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# ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

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## LIABILITIES OF REFORM.

REFORM is an unwelcome, perilous task. It is pruning the tree, or grafting upon it new branches; and we must take care lest we kill or cripple the old stock. An age of reform calls for the most wakeful supervision, and the most cautious guidance. It is a process of moral fermentation which throws the entire mass of society into deep and often fearful commotion. It is a voyage of discovery, and requires an accurate compass, a strong hand at the helm, and a keen, steady eye to look out for rocks and quicksands.

But reform *must* come. The proof of its necessity lies on the face of the whole world. It is the very genius, the grand aim of Christianity; and to deny it would be to contradict every page of the Bible. God raised up prophets, and sent his own Son from heaven, and commissioned apostles, and instituted the church, and furnished her with the complete panoply of his revealed truth, and promised Spirit, on purpose to reclaim a world lying in wickedness from its errors and sins. Here is the object of all the instrumentalities employed or appointed for the recovery of mankind from the ruins of the fall; and to question the necessity of reform, or clog the wheels of its appropriate machinery, is to resist the characteristic spirit of our religion, and thwart the leading design of providence and grace. Reform, understood in its best and broadest sense, is the chief work of the church.

But how is this work to be done? Are we to employ no methods, no instrumentalities for which an exact pattern or parallel cannot be found in the example of Christ or his apostles? Because they preached extempore, shall we call the use

of notes in the pulpit an unwarrantable innovation? Because the first preachers of the gospel went through no professional training of the intellect for their sacred work, shall we denounce an educated ministry as a mere human device? Because they had no specific organization for the spread of the gospel, shall we disband all our missionary boards and societies? Because they at first had no temples of their own, shall we build no more churches for ourselves, but demolish those we already have?

Such reasoning you may utterly discard, yet still object to the *evils* inseparable from all *other* modes and means of reform than those of God's specific appointment. And what are these modes and means? The church and civil government? We doubt whether you can find any agents of reform that have been perverted to purposes equally mischievous; for the world is at this moment full of the evils they have directly or indirectly occasioned. Not that such was the design, or such the legitimate results of either; but bad or misguided men have made them subservient to the worst ends. Well does a gifted writer\* say, "if it has come to this, that nothing is to be approved as a practical principle, which can be abused, that every thing is to be rejected out of which evil can possibly be distilled, we may as well rest at once, and henceforth neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep."

It is not our province to vindicate the general objects, principles and measures of reform now before the public; but *all* the benevolent enterprises of the age have a deep common interest in the subject, and must either prevent or meet, sooner or later, the objections secretly felt, if not openly urged, by good men against such movements. If the aim is merely to correct their abuses, we pledge our hearty assent and cooperation; but if the purpose be to demolish the entire machinery of benevolence and reform now in operation among us, and throw us back, fettered and manacled, upon ecclesiastical organizations, which desire mainly the privilege of neglecting all such objects without reproach, we must enter our solemn protest.

Let not the sole point in dispute be mistaken. We are pretty well agreed, it is said, about "*what* is to be done," and differ only in regard to the *way* of doing it. "Reformation or ruin," is the only alternative before us; but what means or measures shall we employ to effect the reform that is confessedly so indispensable?

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\* Rev. John Maltby.

Preach the gospel? So every body says; but *how* shall it be preached? I wish, said a church-member, in one of our cities, to his pastor, somewhat distinguished for his fearless fidelity, I wish you would preach the *gospel* more.—The gospel *more!* rejoined the pastor, have I preached any thing *but* the gospel?—I think you have, sir; I sometimes feel as if I was starving for want of the *pure* gospel.—My dear sir, said the pastor, with some surprise and solicitude, this is a very serious charge; you must specify particulars. What have I ever preached, that is *not* the gospel?—I can't now remember any thing in particular; though I feel quite sure you don't always preach the gospel.—But certainly you can recollect *something* from *years* of preaching.—No, sir, for I have never taken any notes.—Why, said the pastor, this is a hard case indeed,—to be charged with preaching heresy, and yet not be told a single one of the errors I have been inculcating for years.—O, sir, I don't accuse you of *heresy*; I mean only that you don't preach the *gospel*.—Pray, tell me, then, what you *do* mean; and, since you cannot recall any erroneous *sentiments*, be so good as to mention some of my faulty *sermons*.—I don't remember just now any of those either.—This makes my case still harder; and I think you must either retract your charge, or specify at least a sermon or two.—Well, I now remember one you preached on *Uncharitable Judgments*, and another on the *Sabbath*.—And what was there wrong in *them*?—It was not preaching the gospel, sir.—But *why* not? Did I mistake the meaning of my text in either case?—No; I think you taught what you found in your texts.—And yet it was not preaching the gospel! Do you remember where the texts of those two sermons were?—No.—Well, one was in the Sermon on the Mount, the other was one of the ten commandments; and do I understand you to intimate, that the author of the Decalogue, and the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount, did not know what the gospel is, or that preaching what they have left on record, is not preaching the *gospel*? Will you then be so good as to tell me what you call preaching the gospel?—Tell men to repent!—Repent—of what?—Of sin, to be sure.—Of course; but of *what* sin?—Of *all* sin.—But *all* sin includes the very sins which you censure me for preaching against, and call it no preaching of the gospel.—You should preach against sin *in general*. Tell men they are sinners; they know it, and will be led to repentance; but this preaching *particulars* does no good to any body. It exasperates folks; they won't

take it to themselves ; it is *not* preaching the gospel ; it does *me* no good.—Well, my brother, I can only say, you tell me to do one thing, and God requires me to do another ; and I would willingly leave it with your own conscience to decide which I shall obey.

The main, if not the only, difference between the reformers and the conservatives of the present day, lies in the *mode of applying the gospel* to the sins and evils still lingering in Christendom. They both agree in regarding the gospel as God's grand remedy for the moral maladies of our world ; but while the former urge, the latter oppose, a *specific* application of its principles. It is not our purpose or our province, to argue the point thus in dispute between good men ; but having had some opportunities for candid observation, we will mention a few mistakes into which our conservative brethren seem to have fallen.

1. They take it for granted, that the *church needs* no reform. No other supposition will account for their mode of reasoning ; but the incorrectness of such a position is too glaring to require comment.

2. They assume, moreover, that the church *as a body* will *spontaneously* do whatever is needed in any department of reform. Will history justify such a position ? Was even the *real* church willing, as a whole, to do the work of reform required just before the age of Luther ? Were the churches in our own country prepared, in their *ecclesiastical* capacity, to *start* the cause of temperance, of foreign missions, or any other enterprise of benevolence or reform, before they were roused by the efforts of volunteers ?

3. If the church will not do the work, it is not to be done at all ; for the evils incident to any other mode of doing it are worse than the evils to be corrected. Not that private Christians have no *abstract right* to undertake reforms on their own responsibility ; but the inexpediency is so clear and urgent, as to render abstinence from the exercise of such a right an imperative duty. If the churches of the South do not as *a whole* think best to renounce slave-holding, none of their members, no Christians in any part of the world, should disturb them by any "reformatory" efforts ; nor was it right for the pioneers in the cause of temperance and missions to start as *individuals* in *those* enterprises before the church could be made to move on those subjects in a solid phalanx. By one denomination of Christians at the West, ministers have been

deposed, and members excommunicated from the church, for cooperating with Bible, missionary and kindred societies; nor do we see how such unlicensed co-workers even in the best of causes, could be justified on the principles of modern conservatism.

4. It is assumed, also, that the early Christians labored, not as individuals, but as churches, in reclaiming the world to God. But of what church was Stephen or Philip, Peter or Paul, a commissioned missionary? To what ecclesiastical organization did they hold themselves responsible as preachers or reformers? We do not say that churches as such did not cooperate, or that the first Christian reformers paid no fraternal deference to them; but their example, so far from justifying the theory of reform by the church *alone*, would serve to cover and sanction the whole ground in this respect of modern reformers.

5. These reformers, moreover, are accused of wishing to take the work of reform out of the hands of the church. We cannot speak for them all; but, if we understand them aright, they aim only at persuading the church to take it out of *their* hands by *doing it herself*; and, if she would just do this, we doubt whether she would not supersede, to the great joy of every real reformer, all the reformatory organizations now in existence among us. If the church will carry on the reforms confessedly needed, very good; but, if she will not, it would seem a very hard case if we may neither persuade her to do it, nor attempt to do it ourselves.

6. But this would be coercing men into duty by the lash of public opinion. Is public opinion then to be kept down for the avowed purpose of making men self-satisfied in their degeneracies? Is it never to be used as a prompter to duty, or a dissuasive from error and sin?—It *is* well to *enlighten* public opinion; but it should never be wielded as an engine of reform?—We may *form* public opinion, but must not *employ* it!!

7. The reformers of the present day are also accused of discarding the instrumentality of the gospel as “inefficient, superannuated, inapplicable to the times, too slow in its operations, too calm in its temper, too sparing of epithets.” So far from this, the reformers of *our* acquaintance have relied on the gospel as their grand instrument of reform, and professed to teach no principles, and to seek no objects not embraced in that divine chart of the church. For ourselves we can say, if we did not honestly believe our enterprise to be part of Christianity itself, as it came from the lips of our Saviour, we would

urge its claims no more ; nor would we inculcate any sentiment not found in the gospel, or resort to any measures which its spirit would disown.

8. We feel little respect for the attempts made of late to distinguish enterprises of benevolence from those of reform. There is a difference, but not enough to justify the distinction attempted. Both include essentially the same elements ; and the chief difference lies in the fact, that benevolence is most prominent in one, and reform in the other. You cannot have one without a portion of the other ; there is reform in every enterprise of benevolence, and benevolence in every process of reform. The benevolent enterprises of the day *have* reformed the church in some respects ; they aim to reform the world in still more ; and we see not what else is sought by any process of reform now in operation. Where then is the difference ? Mainly in this, that some reformers of the day urge duties which even good people are not all willing yet to perform. It certainly cannot be in the assumption that benevolent in distinction from reformatory societies, “were created by the churches, are identified with them, are sustained by them, and are acting for them, and in their name ;” for all this could not, at an early period of their history, be said of temperance, missionary and kindred associations, any more than it can now be said of moral reform or anti-slavery. They all originated with individuals ; and the theory of ultra conservatives would have crushed every one of them in the bud. Reform was the first step towards their organization and successful action ; for the whole church had previously neglected the duties which she is now performing through these benevolent societies.

We are far from objecting to criticism on the methods of reform. We are no apologists for the bad spirit, the unwise measures, or the manifold extravagances of reformers in any department. We wish to see every thing that is wrong expunged ; but we still insist on the necessity of reform in *some* way,—by the church, if she will ; by volunteers, if she will not,—as the grand elementary work of the age.

Nor do we see how such reforms are going to supersede, prevent or retard the work of conversion. They are its pioneers and its auxiliaries. For this very reason were the claims of the temperance movement urged upon Christians with great effect ; and such has been the influence of the *reformatory* part of all our *benevolent* enterprises. Look at the results in the powerful and oft-repeated revivals in our land ;

and never will such enterprises, except from mismanagement or perversion, have any other effect. We plead not for the abuses, but for the legitimate uses of reform; and a kind of conservatism which shall make it the chief business of the church, on all such subjects, to hold still, and hold back, will be sure to hang upon her bosom like an incubus of death.

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#### MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS IN TIME OF PEACE.

BY S. E. COUES, ESQ.

We will consider military establishments under four heads, viz, 1. Their expensiveness,—2. Their immorality,—3. Their insalubrity,—4. Their uselessness.

1. *Their* EXPENSIVENESS. It is an undoubted fact, that mankind, with very few exceptions, are more willing to give a dollar to support the law of violence, than a cent to maintain the law of love.

We happen to have it in our power to state particularly the expense of the military peace establishments of Great Britain, having lately received from that country some documents on the subject. It appears from the vouchers therein recorded, that preparation for war in time of peace, including £9,330,348 for the militia and yeomanry, has cost that country, £418,173,603 sterling,\* in 21 years of peace, ending in 1837—a sum equal to 4,355 tons of pure gold, or a load for 14 ships of the ordinary size in gold, or a load for a fleet of 224 ships in silver. But we should add to that sum £60,000,000 which the 100,000 men who compose the peace establishments of Great Britain would have earned, at ten shillings a week, making in the aggregate, the almost inconceivable sum of 480 millions of pounds sterling. Now, if we divide 418 millions by 60 millions, and allow that a man and his family spend all his wages, it will be found, that it costs the country almost seven times as much to support a man in idleness, as it does to support that man and his whole family when usefully employed. To support this immense expense, *the people* are compelled to pay an enormous tax on every necessary of life, and on comforts and luxuries in some cases to the amount of three times their first cost, and now, in this twenty-fourth year of peace, the war expenses of that country, including the interest on the war debt, swallow up seven eighths of the products of these oppressive taxes, which, so far as the

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\* A pound sterling is nearly four dollars and a half.